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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to decrease turnover of newly hired teachers in a child care center by means of a 12-week orientation and training program for newly hired staff. In 1992, nearly half of the newly hired teachers had left the center within 6 months. Surveys of remaining staff, some of whom had already turned in resignations, indicated that the majority felt that their job responsibilities, the center's goals and objectives, and center policies and procedures were unclear. The program developed and implemented to correct this problem included presentations on personnel policies, center policies and procedures, licensing regulations, parent communication, classroom management, and the goals and mission of the center. An analysis of post-intervention teacher surveys found that the teachers were able to identify the mission and goals of the center, understood school policies and procedures, were aware of state licensing requirements, and could demonstrate an understanding of classroom management techniques. Staff turnover was reduced as a result of this practicum, with 9 out of 12 participants remaining employed at the center for a period of 3 months or longer. (Four appendixes contain copies of the classroom observation checklist, center goals and objectives, policies and procedures survey, and the center's mission and vision.)
(Author/MDM)

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A Staff Orientation and Training Program Developed to Decrease Turnover of Newly Hired Staff in a Child Care Center

by

Janice I. Bisesi

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Bobette Mooney

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December 9, 1993
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This practicum report was submitted by Janice I. Bisesi under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Jan 13, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT....iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS....iv

ABSTRACT....vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION....1
Description of Community....1
Writer's Work Setting and Role....1

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM....5
Problem Description....5
Problem Documentation....6
Causative Analysis....7
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature....9

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS....16
Goals and Expectations....16
Expected Outcomes....16
Measurement of Outcomes....17

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY....19
Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions....19
Description of Selected Solution....27
Report of Action Taken....28

V. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS....39
Results....38
Discussion....42
Recommendations....47
Dissemination....47

REFERENCES....48

Appendices
A CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECK LIST....51

B CENTER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES....54

C POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SURVEY....56

D CENTER'S MISSION AND VISION....61

ABSTRACT

A Staff Orientation and Training Program Developed to Decrease Turnover of Newly Hired Staff in a Child Care Center. Bisesi, Janice I., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Staff Turnover/Child Care Center/Preschool/Staff Training/Orientation

The child care center owned and directed by this writer, had a high rate of teacher turnover for newly hired staff. This practicum was designed to decrease turnover of newly hired teachers in a child care setting, through participation in a twelve week orientation and training program.

The writer developed a staff orientation and training program for newly hired teaching staff. Teachers participated in this program which presented such topics as: personnel policies; center policies and procedures; licensing regulations, parent communication, classroom management; and goals and mission of the center. Following implementation of this practicum, teachers were given surveys and questionnaires to measure understanding of concepts presented.

Analysis of the data revealed that teachers were able to identify the mission and goals of the center, gained a better understanding of school policies and procedures, and became more aware of state licensing requirements. They were able to demonstrate their understanding of classroom management techniques in their individual classrooms. Staff turnover was reduced as a result of this practicum, as nine out of 12 participants remained employed at the center for a period of three months or longer.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

This writer's work setting was a privately owned, for-profit, preschool/child care center. The facility was located in the north central section of the United States, in the suburbs of a major metropolitan city. Situated in a predominately white, upper middle class residential area, the center was immediately surrounded by a small professional office park. The center was located near the city by-pass interstate highway system, on the main north/south artery to the downtown business area. The facility was convenient for families living in the surrounding residential area, those working in the nearby professional office space, and those traveling to the inner city work place. While the residential area was stable, the northern boundary of the community was growing rapidly. An increasing amount of professional office space was under construction and larger corporations were continuing to enter the area.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

This writer was co-founder, owner and Director of this newly constructed preschool/child care center, which was originally established in 1974. The writer and a teaching colleague began the program in response to the need for high quality, preschool

experiences for young children. The preschool was originally housed in rooms located in a neighborhood church. Because the leased space was minimal, each room could not be furnished as an independent classroom. Therefore, the concept of rotating classrooms was introduced, each room providing learning experiences for specific areas of the curriculum. Language Arts, Creative Arts, Gross Motor, and Fine Motor activities were offered in separate classrooms. During the preschool sessions, children moved into each room with their class and their teachers. Since most parents welcomed the idea of their child(ren) not remaining in one room for the entire preschool session, the concept was widely accepted.

Part time preschool classes were offered to children aged two through five years. Sessions were two and one half hours in length, and children attended from two to five days per week. Enrollment grew rapidly, and a reputation was soon established in the community for providing a high quality preschool program. Within five years, 175 children were enrolled in the program, and classes were consistently full. When an increasing number of mothers began to enter the work place, family needs changed. Although still desiring a preschool experience for their child(ren), many also needed a full day program. Families strongly encouraged this writer to expand the existing preschool program, into a full day care setting. Since this required a huge personal investment of both time and money, it was only after considerable thought and extensive research this writer responded and opened a new facility.

The facility was designed, decorated and equipped with considerable input from this writer. The new center was residential in character and projected a homelike environment. Cheerfully decorated, oversized classrooms (which included wallpaper, carpet, and window treatments) were several physical features of the center. The center's security system, atrium play area and large classroom observation windows assured a safe

environment. Although classrooms were fully equipped, materials still provided for the special activities (e.g., gross motor, fine motor, language arts, creative art), needed for classroom rotation.

The new facility operated from 6:45 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., on a year round basis. The program continued to provide the same high quality preschool program, combined with full time care. Although the center was licensed by state agencies for 213 children, ages six weeks to 12 years, a maximum number of 185 children were accepted into the program. Sixteen infants (six weeks to one year), 10 toddlers (one to two years), and 159 children (three through twelve years), were enrolled on a full time basis. The center had operated at capacity enrollment since opening in Fall, 1989, and held waiting lists for all age groups.

The school employed a total staff of 45 employees. Personal backgrounds, educational qualifications, and experiences in the field of child care, varied widely. Educational levels for staff ranged from a high school diploma to an advanced college degree. For most employees, teaching at the center was not a career oriented position. Many worked at the center as a part time employee, while they completed their college education. Some held degrees in elementary or early childhood education, but were unable to obtain a teaching position in the public school system. Others worked at the center until a more financially rewarding position became available (most often in another profession).

There were five employees on the administrative staff at the center. The Assistant Director coordinated special events, provided orientation for new families, and supervised the Infant and Toddler program. The Administrative Assistant assisted the Director in the daily operation of the school, conducted school tours for prospective families, and determined class enrollment. The Personnel Director recruited, interviewed, and hired

new staff, maintained employee files, and established daily schedules for teachers. The Accountant was responsible for all accounting functions, which included accounts receivable, accounts payable, staff payroll, and monthly financial reports. The Kitchen Manager's responsibilities included planning meals, ordering food, preparing and serving food to the children and staff, and maintaining an inventory for all food supplies. In addition, two custodians were employed at the center on a part time basis.

As Director, this writer was responsible for the daily operation of the center, which included a multitude of duties. Financial concerns, staff supervision, school programming, and marketing, were all responsibilities of this writer. Financial concerns included establishing tuition fees, maintaining cost controls, setting salaries, determining employee benefits, and preparing annual budgets. Staff supervision consisted of providing orientation, training, and professional development for teaching, support, and administrative staff. School programming included planning special events, establishing school standards and overseeing compliance with licensing requirements. This writer also established program curriculum goals and objectives, and personally wrote daily lesson plans for Two Year Old through Jr. Kindergarten classes. Enrolling new families and determining age group classes was also the responsibility of the writer. The writer planned for future growth and expansion of the center and engaged in strategic planning.

Additional responsibilities of this writer included customer service, and daily communication with parents (e.g., counseling, problem solving, newsletters). This writer also frequently taught music classes (singing), wrote and directed an annual all-school musical theatre production, and often led physical fitness classes.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The situation that needed improvement in this child care/preschool setting was an extremely high rate of staff turnover, especially for newly hired teachers. At that time, a staff of approximately 40 head teachers and teaching assistants were employed at the center on a full or part time basis. Only six of these classroom teachers had remained at the center for a period of one year or longer, and all were in Head Teacher positions. All Assistant Teachers had been at the center for one year or less.

This problem had existed since the opening of the new center and had grown in magnitude. Interestingly, staff turnover was not a concern at the original center. Teachers rarely left their positions until after the school year was completed, and most always returned for the next school year. At the new center, however, working conditions changed. Their work day was longer (as the program was in operation year round), there were no school vacation breaks, and their responsibilities grew to include both teaching and caregiving. Both stress levels and staff turnover increased.

When prospective teachers were interviewed at the present center, they were asked to consider the importance of teacher stability. Most new staff members made a verbal

commitment to remain at the center for a minimum of one year, but according to the records, this rarely happened. Teachers holding degrees in early childhood or elementary education, quickly left their positions when a teaching position in the public school system became available. Others left, citing working conditions that seemed agreeable at the time they were hired (e.g., low wages, lack of insurance benefits), as reasons for their resignation.

For several years, this writer had researched this problem by attending numerous child care conferences, reading related literature, and discussing possible solutions with other child care directors. Briefly stated, the problem was that newly hired teachers remained at the center for only a short period of time.

Problem Documentation

This problem was documented by employment data in personnel files, and results of teacher surveys administered to staff. Personnel records for the year of 1992 indicated that 51 new employees had been hired at this writer's center. At that time, only 15 of those staff members remain employed. Resignations (effective at the end of the school semester), had already been received from four of these remaining teachers. Another of these employees was actively pursuing a career in a higher paying profession. A further examination of employment records revealed staggering statistics. The length of time teachers remained at the center ranged from only days to a maximum of six months. Eleven had left the center after working for less than one month, 12 had remained at the center from one to three months, and 13 had worked from three to six months.

Written surveys documented how staff members perceived their working conditions. Staff members were given a "Role Perception Questionnaire", "Prekindergarten Teacher Problems Checklist", and "Early Childhood Work Environment Survey" (Bloom,

Sheerer, & Britz, 1991). Results indicated that 18 out of 32 teachers felt their job responsibilities were only somewhat clear. Eighteen out of 32 teachers were unaware of the goals and objectives for their position. Seventeen out of 30 teachers felt policies and procedures were unclear. Eighteen out of 30 teachers felt they did not have a clear understanding of the center's mission.

Causative Analysis

In this writer's opinion, the causes of the problem were varied and difficult to identify. Identifying reasons for turnover was often dependent on information obtained during exit interviews held with resigning teachers. This writer often found that teachers were reluctant to honestly disclose their reasons for leaving the center. Unfortunately, in these instances, exit interviews were not helpful in identifying causes for the problem. Occasionally staff members left their positions with no advance notice, and there was no opportunity to conduct exit interviews. Unbelievably, some teachers left at the end of their work day and never returned to the center.

There were several possible reasons for the high rate of staff turnover. This writer felt that the recruitment and interview processes in place at the center were ineffective. Because some newly hired teachers remained employed for a period of only several days, (and in some cases only several hours), it was important to re-evaluate the recruitment and hiring procedures that were in place. While recruitment included advertising with area universities, the majority of advertising was done in the city newspaper. Classified advertisements were placed under the headings of teacher, caregiver, or child care worker. There were very few responses to advertisements in any of these categories. Applicants who did respond were asked to complete an employment application and a personal interview was scheduled. Interviews were conducted by the Personnel Manager or the

Assistant Director, but there was no structured interview process followed.

After employees had been hired, there was no formalized orientation program in place for newly hired staff. Therefore, new staff were unaware of the center's mission or vision. They were unfamiliar with the standards of the school and the mandatory state licensing regulations. There were no clearly written job descriptions, therefore, teachers were placed in classrooms unsure of the duties they were required to perform. There were no clearly written classroom policies and procedures, so new employees had no reference for answering any procedural questions. Since there was no updated staff handbook, written answers to questions regarding their employment (sick days, vacation pay, dress code, etc.), were also unavailable. In this writer's opinion, this lack of formal orientation was a major reason for high staff turnover.

Absence of in-service training may have also been a cause for this problem. Because teachers often left the center with little advance notification, new teachers were needed immediately in the classroom, which left little opportunity for advanced training. At that time, there was no formalized in-service training program offered to new staff.

Turnover also occurred when teachers who worked at the center (while attending university classes on a part time basis), decided to continue their education on a full time basis. This was nearly impossible to predict and could not be discouraged.

The most frequent reason given by employees who left the center were the low wages and lack of benefits, (especially health insurance). Many who worked at the center on a temporary basis, were waiting for a more lucrative job position to become available. This writer personally felt this was the main reason for high staff turnover. Unfortunately, little could have been done to improve this situation, as the problem was directly related to income received by the center, which is totally dependent on tuition rates. At that time,

the center's fees were as high as the market would support, and wages could not be significantly increased. However, some benefits were offered by the center. Paid holidays, personal (sick) and vacation days, free lunches, and discounted child care rates, were offered to full time employees. The most important benefit to many newly hired teachers seemed to be health insurance coverage, which was not offered at the center.

In addition to voluntary teacher resignations, newly hired teachers were occasionally asked to resign due to substandard job performance. This also contributed to the high staff turnover rate.

Several reasons for staff resignation had been disclosed during exit interviews. According to personnel records, eleven employees had left the center for jobs offering health insurance benefits and higher wages. Six teachers had resigned to continue their college education, and five had cited stress as the main reason for resignation. Pregnancy, moving out of the city, lack of transportation, and poor health were also reasons mentioned. Five employees had left the center with no advance notice, and had simply failed to report to work for their next scheduled hours. Five new employees had been asked to resign, because of poor work performance.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Undoubtedly, the problem of staff turnover is one of the most pressing concerns in the child care industry. An abundance of information was found regarding this crucial problem. It appeared the high rate of staff turnover is not a new problem, but one that has been a growing concern for many years (Ritchie, 1991). Today, directors of child care programs nationwide are facing this dilemma, and continuing to search for solutions (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, 1990). Daniel (1990) states, that the child care industry is an "industry drowning" (p. 23). It appears that although staff turnover occurs in public

schools, the greatest crisis is within the industry of privately owned child care centers (Granger, 1989). Galinsky (1989) states that the staffing crisis is the problem most frequently identified by educators, when they attend National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conferences.

Directors, operating under state licensing regulations, must maintain pupil-teacher ratios as designated by the law. Because so many teachers are leaving the field and ratios must be met, directors are often forced to move teachers from room to room, while quickly attempting to hire new staff (Strober, et al., 1989). It is also apparent to many directors, that those entering the child care profession lack the training and commitment they once had (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, 1990).

Because child care work is such a demanding job, teacher stress is leading to burnout and therefore contributing to the problem. (Mattingly, 1977; Strober, et al., 1989). Not only does stress cause many teachers to leave the profession, but the quality of care given by teachers continuing to work at the center, may decline as turnover increases (Strober, et al.).

It is difficult to recruit and retain teachers in child care settings (Whitebook & Granger, 1989). Many qualified teachers are leaving the field, while fewer are choosing child care work as a profession (Pettygrove, Whitebook & Weir, 1984). Often directors find it impossible to continually replace staff with someone experienced in the field, or one who has the qualifications needed for employment (Scallan & Kalinowski, 1990; Whitebook, Howes, Phillips, & Pemberton, 1989). To constantly recruit and hire new teachers, and then provide the necessary training, can be highly frustrating to administrators (Counselman, 1987). This writer frequently experienced this frustration, as the center's Personnel Director was continually advertising, interviewing, and selecting new staff. The

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process seemed never ending, as resignations continued to be received, and staff turnover rates continued to rise. This time consuming process is not only expensive for the center, but can cause program quality to suffer (Galinsky, 1989).

Reducing staff turnover is especially important in younger children's classes, when children are highly affected by change (Whitebook & Granger, 1989; Galinsky, 1989). Educators agree on the importance of having a consistent staff, particularly for very young children (Strober, et al, 1989; Counselman, 1987). Galinsky states that children's early childhood education may suffer, when they are subjected to many different caregivers. Children are often confused by staff turnover, as they are often unable to understand why their teacher is leaving (Carroll, 1993). Educators have found that consistency of staff is directly related to providing high quality child care (Webb & Lowther, 1990; Strober, et al; Granger, 1989; Galinsky). Since most directors of child care centers do not want to simply offer baby-sitting (or custodial care), the problem of staff turnover in this profession must be addressed (Webb & Lowther).

There is alarming evidence to document this problem in the field of early childhood education and child care. In 1988, the Child Care Employee Project reported that 40-60% of teachers leave their jobs annually (Whitebook & Granger, 1989). In a recent follow-up study, the Child Care Employee Project reported that between 1991-1992, 26% of child care workers left their jobs. Other occupations had only a 9.6% rate of turnover, while in public schools, teachers had only a 5.6% rate of turnover (Carroll, 1993). Unfortunately, these statistics confirm that workers in the field of early childhood education remain in the jobs for only a short period of time (Modigliani, 1986). Complicating the situation, surveys of child care directors, indicate that teaching positions may remain vacant for an average of one month (Whitebook & Granger).

A review of literature suggests many possible causes for this high rate of turnover. Low salaries, lack of benefits, high stress levels, job dissatisfaction, unfavorable hiring practices, organizational problems, and lack of opportunity for professional development, all contribute to the problem. It is evident, however, that most educators feel low salaries and lack of benefits are the primary cause of high staff turnover (Webb & Lowther, 1990; Daniel, 1990; Stremmel, 1991; Modigliani, 1986; Stroeber, et al., 1989; Perreault, 1990; Granger, 1989; Ritchie, 1991; Galinsky, 1989; Pettygrove, et al., 1984). This writer agreed, as lack of insurance benefits and the low rate of pay were the most frequent reasons given by staff when submitting resignations. Since many newly hired teachers have recently completed their high school education and others are continuing their college education, it is understandable that wages and benefits should be of primary concern. Modigliani states that considering the level of education required for teachers, they are extremely underpaid when working in a child care setting. Compared to other professions, wages for child care teachers are among the lowest (Modigliani).

Stress and stress related symptoms can also cause staff turnover, as child care teachers are under a great amount of pressure. Teachers have the enormous responsibility of caring for many children for an entire day. The demands are both physical and mental and require a large amount of both physical and emotional stamina (Mattingly, 1977; Zeece, 1991). Newly hired teachers may encounter frequent illnesses when they begin working with children (Modigliani, 1976). Usually, when teachers first began to work at this writer's center, they had a high rate of absences due to illness. When prospective employees were interviewed, good health was always stressed as a prerequisite for working at the center. Teachers were informed that they would be exposed to more communicable diseases, they would frequently be lifting or carrying children, and would

often be bending to speak with children at eye level. Back problems also surface, as a result of child care work (Modigliani). In this writer's center, teachers who worked in the Infant Rooms had been recently told to change baby's diapers in their individual cribs, instead of using changing tables. (This is in accordance with state licensing regulations, and a recommended procedure.) After implementing the new procedure, teachers immediately began complaining of back discomfort.

Child care is an emotionally demanding and stressful job for many new teachers. This writer found that some teachers were emotionally unable to care for children on a full day basis. At the writer's former school setting, teachers were only involved with children for several hours each day. However, these same teachers encountered physical and emotional stress that lead to burnout and resignation, when they worked in the new full time center. Heath-Camp & Camp (1990) state than even though new teachers may choose to continue in their positions, their first year can be filled with frustrations. Additional causes for stress related symptoms include: working with parents, inadequate staffing, managing difficult children, (Strober, et al, 1989), and too many job responsibilities (Modigliani, 1986).

Many teachers leave the child care profession because they are unsatisfied with their working conditions. Factors influencing job satisfaction are varied, but may include the low professional image of the job, an ever changing work schedule, the unavailability of substitute teachers, and the amount of unpaid work the position requires (Strober, et al. (1989). Also, teachers in child care rarely receive the prestige they deserve, as their work is often thought of as "playing with kids all day" (Hyson, 1984, p.53). It is understandable how this image could be a source of frustration for teachers working in child care programs.

Hiring practices may also contribute to staff turnover. Advertising does not always attract the type of employee needed (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, 1990). In addition, it was the experience of this writer to find the hiring procedure both time consuming and expensive. A further concern, was trying to select the best person for the job. In today's world, it is virtually impossible to obtain any information from previous employers regarding applicants work history.

Also important, is the involvement of the director in the hiring process. If the director is not involved in the hiring and final selection process, this may also be a contributing factor effecting staff stability (Sheerer & Bloom).

Organizational problems can be another reason for staff turnover. Unclear communications between teaching staff and administration (Ritchie, 1991), inflexible work schedules (Mattingly, 1977), dissatisfaction with policies and procedures, and style of management (Strober, et al., 1989), are all related to this problem. Teachers may not be directly involved in the decision making processes, which may cause staff dissatisfaction (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, 1990). In addition, communication between administrative and teaching staff may be unclear (Ritchie), and policies and procedures may not be clearly communicated to staff (Heath-Camp & Camp, 1990).

Lack of orientation and training (Heath-Camp & Camp, 1990), unfamiliarity with school missions or standards (Ritchie, 1991), little opportunity for professional development (Galinsky, 1989), and unfamiliarity of job expectations (Heath-Camp & Camp), also cause staff turnover. Many newly hired teachers find themselves placed in a classroom with minimal orientation or training, and left to "sink or swim" (Heath-Camp & Camp, p. 22). Unfortunately, this was often the situation in this writer's child care center. Because state pupil-teacher ratios had to be met and teacher resignations frequently did

not include a two week notice, there was little or no time for advance training. This was frustrating for both administrators and teachers alike. Administrators were aware they were placing untrained staff in classrooms, but considered it the better alternative than not having the room adequately staffed. In addition, frustrations often occur when teachers are unfamiliar with the school's standards, mission or goals (Ritchie, 1991). Teachers at this writer's center had also expressed this concern, when they responded to a survey. It was understandable, that newly hired teachers were unfamiliar with the background of the center, the standards it upholds, the mission of the school, and the vision for the future.

The lack of opportunity for professional development is also a reason for staff turnover. There is no career ladder for child care workers (Ritchie, 1991). Many teachers feel that working as a Head Teacher is the highest level of accomplishment that can be reached in a child care center. They feel there is little opportunity for wages to increase dramatically, if the highest level of employment has already been reached.

Insufficient professional training and development also causes turnover (Ritchie). Uncertainty regarding the specific duties of the job is another cause for concern. Job descriptions are often unclear and do not specifically identify desired performance (Mattingly, 1977). The lack of thorough orientation, training sessions, and performance evaluation, can also contribute to staff resignations. When feedback and performance evaluation is not regularly provided for staff, teachers have no indication of the level of their job performance (Neugebauer, 1991; Ritchie).

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. It was expected that newly hired teachers would remain at the center for a longer period of time. There would also be an increased level of commitment from new employees. Finally, the stress level of newly hired teachers would be reduced.

Expected Outcomes

Following implementation of this practicum, the following outcomes were expected:

1. Based on employee records, eight out of 10 newly hired employees will remain at the center for a period of three months or longer.

2. Eight out of 10 newly hired employees will receive a minimum score of 90% on a classroom observation check list, evaluating performance as outlined in their job descriptions (see Appendix A).

3. Eight out of 10 newly hired teachers will be able to identify at least five goals and objectives for their jobs, as measured by a written questionnaire (see Appendix B).

4. Eight out of 10 newly hired teachers will receive a minimum score of 90% on a

written measurement regarding school and classroom policies and procedures (see Appendix C).

5. Eight out of 10 newly hired teachers will score 100% on a verbal questionnaire, identifying the center's mission and future visions (see Appendix D).

Measurement of Outcomes

The expected outcomes were measured by several evaluation instruments, administered throughout the orientation and training sessions. Both written and/or verbal measurements were administered, as related orientation modules were completed.

The first expected outcome was measured by the length of time newly hired staff remained employed by the center, and was documented by date of hire and date of resignation, as recorded in personnel files.

The second expected outcome (employees understanding of job descriptions), was measured by teacher observation in a classroom setting. A classroom observation check list, prepared by this writer, measured understanding and performance of specific job responsibilities (see Appendix A). Staff was observed in the classroom by the Personnel Director, and performance (as identified in job descriptions) recorded on the check list. An individual conference was then held (with the administrator and the teacher) and observations were discussed.

The third expected outcome (identifying goals and objectives for their jobs), was measured by a written questionnaire (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was given to each teacher, and they were asked to identify several goals and objectives for their jobs and for the center. It was expected that they would have a minimum of five correct responses.

Knowledge of policies and procedures (the fourth expected outcome), was measured by a written instrument, and included true and false, short answer, and fill in the blank questions (see Appendix C). The instrument, was prepared and administered by this writer.

Finally, a short, verbal questionnaire, prepared by this writer and administered by the Personnel Director (see Appendix D), was given to each new staff member. They were asked to identify the center's mission and future vision. Answers were recorded, and placed in personnel files. New staff members were expected to be able to identify the mission of the school and visions for the future.

All instruments were scored as described above. Individual scores were recorded and analyzed. Expected outcomes were achieved on written or verbal measures, if eight out of ten new staff met the minimum requirements as stated. Attendance was recorded for all orientation sessions. In most cases, teachers who resigned while participating in these sessions, were given an exit interview and their reasons for resignation were recorded. Data presented in this report identifies individual scores for each participating staff member.

This writer kept a journal, and recorded observations and comments made at the orientation sessions. Unexpected events were also documented in the journal and questions raised by the new staff were noted. At the completion of the practicum orientation sessions, staff was asked to evaluate the orientation sessions. This information was also recorded in a journal, and collected data will be used for continuing or revising future orientation and training sessions.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The problem addressed in this practicum was the high rate of staff turnover for newly hired employees. These head teachers and teaching assistants often remained at the center for a period of less than one year, while many stayed at the center for only three to six months. During employment interviews, prospective employees were reminded of the importance of consistency of staff when working with young children. They were informed of the problems that often occurred when there was a high rate of staff turnover, and the intent of the center to minimize these problems. They were also advised that the center was selecting only those teachers who were willing to make a minimum time commitment of at least one school year. During the employment interviews, prospective teachers assured administrators of their intent to remain at the center for a minimum of one school year. It was found, however, that even though these newly hired teachers had made this verbal commitment, many resignations were received after only a few months. The center experienced a high rate of staff turnover for these newly hired teachers.

While conducting the literature search for this practicum, this writer found that many possible causes and solutions to this problem were identified. It was obvious, however, if this critical problem was to be solved, more and more solutions must be explored. Sheerer and Jorde-Bloom (1990) stated "there is no 'quick fix' to the staffing crisis", (p. 12). Solutions related to the general causes for teacher turnover identified in Chapter 2, and included: low salaries and lack of benefit programs, stress related symptoms, job satisfaction and commitment, hiring procedures, and organizational problems.

The crucial problem of low wages for child care workers had the obvious solution of raising salaries, and most educators agreed this would certainly reduce staff turnover (Ritchie, 1991). Benefit packages might also offer a solution to the staffing crisis. Another suggested solution, offering free child care to working mothers with children, was a benefit some centers already offered their employees (Perreault, 1990).

Job satisfaction and stress were closely related, as teachers experiencing stress related symptoms were seldom satisfied with their job. Solutions to help teachers manage stress included: offering exercise programs for employees (Bailey & Bishop, 1989), providing orientation and in-service training sessions regarding stress, and encouraging teachers to support one another in managing stress (Mattingly, 1977). There was a wide range of solutions for reducing symptoms of stress and increasing job satisfaction. Improving the physical work environment (Bloom, 1986) and providing a place for relaxation for staff (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, 1990) can improve attitudes and behavior (Bloom). Conditions relating to the work itself can be improved by: allowing flexibility in scheduling work hours or vacations, providing adequate substitute staff (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom), and staff recognition for a job well done (Ritchie, 1991). Unexpected breaks, surprise lunches or gifts (Ritchie), and organized social events can also increase the level of job satisfaction

(Counselman, 1987). Opportunities for staff to communicate through social functions, classroom visitation, and forming support groups, were other possible solutions (Counselman; Freudenberger, 1977).

Webb and Lowther (1990) stated that before the problem of staff turnover could be solved, the profession must be able to "attract and retain qualified teachers" (p. 4). Therefore, it was important when advertising for new staff, the kind of worker the center wants to hire, is attracted (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, 1990). Sheerer and Jorde-Bloom also stressed the importance of involving the center director in the interviewing and hiring process for prospective staff.

Solving organizational problems might also positively effect staff turnover. It was important that center policies, procedures, goals, standards, and missions of the center be clearly defined (Bloom, 1988; Ritchie, 1991; Heath-Camp & Camp, 1990). Continuous training should be offered teachers and follow up procedures implemented (Ritchie; Whitebook, et al., 1989; Freudenberger, 1977). Providing teachers with regular feedback regarding their job performance was also important (Zeece, 1991; Bloom; Ritchie; Neugebauer, 1991). Many authors stressed the importance of continuous evaluation, feedback and recognition for new employees (Ritchie; Heath-Camp & Camp; Bloom; Neugebauer).

Zeece (1991) stated that teachers should be given detailed job descriptions. Heath-Camp and Camp (1990) stated the importance of providing teachers with a staff handbook that identifies routine procedures and school policies. Center directors should also provide a thorough orientation program for all staff (Heath-Camp & Camp; Bloom, 1986). Heath-Camp and Camp also suggested that in-service training for teachers be provided throughout the first year of employment. Both teachers and administrators

should clearly communicate with one another (Ritchie, 1992; Bloom, 1988; Whitebook, et al, 1989; & Freudenberger, 1977). Some literature suggested establishing a mentor system for new teachers (Counselman, 1987; Heath Camp & Camp).

This writer saw merit in each of these solutions, and already had in place many of the suggestions. It was extremely disappointing to find suggested solutions had apparently not reduced teacher turnover. Many agreed that increasing salaries and offering benefits to teachers would reduce turnover (Counselman, 1987; Galinsky, 1989; Granger, 1989; Perreault, 1990; Whitebook, et al., 1989). This, however, was not a possible solution for this writer, as tuition rates (the only source of income for the center), had already been established. The center had offered benefits such as discounted child care fees, paid sick/personal days and vacation, and free lunches to staff. Unfortunately, insurance benefits were not offered, which this writer strongly felt is an important consideration for young, newly hired staff. Staff wages, however, were slightly above the salaries other centers were paying their employees.

Suggestions offered for increasing job satisfaction and lowering stress levels, included: offering exercise programs, providing orientation and in-service training regarding stress, and encouraging teachers to support one another in managing stress (Bailey & Bishop, 1989; Mattingly, 1977). Since many employees had left this writer's center, citing stress and burnout as the major reason for resignation, it was definitely a problem that need to be addressed. All of these solutions were favorable options, and stress orientation and staff support could be included in a staff orientation program. This writer, a certified Jazzercise instructor, had previously offered free exercise classes for the entire staff. It was surprising that very few teachers chose to attend, and classes were discontinued due to lack of interest. It was a well known fact, however, that exercise could effectively

reduce stress related symptoms.

Improving the physical work environment and providing a place for relaxation for staff was another suggested solution to improve job satisfaction (Bloom, 1986; Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, 1990). This writer agreed on the importance of a pleasant physical environment, and had already implemented many relaxing features in the new center. Classrooms were designed and constructed to be oversized and each was cheerfully decorated with window treatments and wall coverings. A teacher's lounge was located in the mezzanine level of the center, and provided a work area, teacher resources, telephone, lounge chairs, sofa, and television. Staff enjoyed their lunch or simply relaxed in this area.

Sheerer and Jorde-Bloom, (1990) stated that conditions relating to the work itself can be improved by allowing flexibility in scheduling work hours and vacations, providing for adequate substitute staff, and recognizing staff for a job well done (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, Ritchie, 1991). In this writer's opinion all of these solutions were valuable, and each had already been implemented in the center. Schedules were flexible, and offered the hours necessary to allow staff to attend university classes. Young mothers could leave the center in time to meet their own children arriving home from school. The administration was extremely lenient regarding absences, and vacation schedules were always selected by the staff. Staff members were rarely denied requested vacation days or time off. Several substitute teachers had been hired at the center on a full time basis, and were scheduled in the classrooms as absences occurred. Although this did increase payroll costs for the center, it allowed for class ratios to be consistently met, and teachers were never asked to assume the burden of an entire class without an assistant. Staff recognition was provided on a continual basis, in the form of monetary rewards. In addition, a Staff

Member of the Month was selected by peers and received special gifts and recognition during that time. On-staff substitute teachers were often available to provide unexpected breaks to regularly scheduled classroom teachers. Although surprise lunches, gifts, and organized social events did not occur on a regular basis, they were occasionally included in the program (Ritchie; Counselman, 1987).

When focusing on recruiting and hiring procedures, the importance of attracting the kind of employee needed and including the director in the hiring process was suggested to reduce staff turnover (Sheerer & Jorde-Bloom, 1990). As center director, this writer was already personally involved in the hiring process. Prospective staff were first interviewed by the Personnel Manager, but the final interview was conducted with the Director. Because the response to newspaper advertisements was often minimal, advertisements had been rewritten numerous times. Newspaper headings in which the classified advertisements were placed, also varied. Advertisements had been placed under headings of: Day Care, Child Care, Teacher, and Caregiver. Advertisements were also placed on local university student bulletin boards. Often, those responding to advertisements were unqualified and did not have any previous experience working with young children. Some applicants thought baby-sitting as a teen ager, constituted such experience. Others simply indicated that they loved all children. It was extremely difficult to continually search for employees who met the standards of our center.

Solutions to organizational problems included: providing a clear definition of center policies, procedures, goals, and standards, (Bloom, 1988: Ritchie, 1991: Heath-Camp & Camp, 1990), offering continuous in-service training (Ritchie; Whitebook, et al., 1989; Freudenberger, 1977), and providing regular feedback regarding job performance (Zeece, 1991; Bloom; Ritchie; Neugebauer, 1991). Although an attempt had been made by this

writer to include these solutions in the program, they had never been fully implemented. This writer recognized the importance of employees having this information, and intended to include these solutions in the program.

Providing detailed job descriptions and a staff handbook (Zeece, 1991), offering an orientation program, and providing continued in-service training (Heath-Camp & Camp, 1990; Bloom, 1986), were other possible solutions to this problem. None of these solutions were included in the writer's program. A brief orientation session was presented by the Personnel Director, followed by minimal training in the classroom. Staff complained that newly hired teachers were placed in their classrooms without adequate preparation, and insisted they were unable to train a new teacher while having the responsibility of teaching children at the same time. In-service training sessions were offered for a brief time, but were discontinued after the teacher conducting the sessions resigned. In this writer's opinion, a staff handbook was also an absolute necessity for the entire staff.

Communication between administrative and teaching staff had been a problem at this writer's center. Maintaining clear communications was another solution offered to reduce turnover (Ritchie, 1992; Bloom, 1988; Whitebook, et al., 1989; Freudenberger, 1977). This writer recognized this solution to be of major importance, and was striving to improve the level of communication at the center. Teachers received a weekly newsletter (written by the director), which kept them updated on center happenings. Staff meetings, which included all Head Teachers and the Director, were held on a weekly basis.

Although some literature suggested establishing a mentor system for new teachers (Counselman, 1987; Heath Camp & Camp, 1990), this hadn't been formally implemented in this writer's center. When new assistant teachers were assigned a classroom, the Head Teacher acted as the mentor teacher. Although the mentor program was not yet fully

developed in the center, it was certainly a valid option for attempting to reduce staff turnover.

Professional development was strongly encouraged and opportunities to attend local and national conferences, were often provided by this writer. All expenses, (e.g., travel, food, lodging, and conference fees), were paid by the center. In addition, this writer encouraged visits to other child care centers, and frequently included staff on trips out of the city to observe other high quality programs.

Other solutions had also been generated by this writer, but were not yet in place at the center. The use of slide presentations in orientation training for new staff, and implementing video recordings as a method of training new teachers, were solutions under consideration by this writer. In an effort to encourage teachers to remain at the center for the minimum of a school year, this writer also considered offering a monetary incentive. It was the opinion of this writer that newly hired staff would choose to remain at the center, if their length of service was monetarily rewarded. Monetary incentives, given at the completion of the school term (or school year), might encourage a teacher considering midyear resignation to complete the semester (year). This solution, although costly, was less expensive than increasing hourly wages, and may provide the small incentive needed for teachers to remain at the center.

In an effort to reduce turnover, though indirectly, this writer had recently implemented a new procedure when children were assigned new age group classes. Instead of having a teacher change at this time, Head Teachers and their assistants moved to the next age group class with their children. Although not specifically solving the problem of staff turnover, this did reduce the frequency of teacher changes for the children. Teachers were agreeable to this procedure, and looked forward to the challenge of teaching another age

group. Parents widely accepted this procedure, and appreciated any effort to minimize the effects of staff turnover on their children.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

After considering all of the solutions presented, this writer chose to design and implement an orientation and training program for newly hired staff. This solution was chosen because it was strongly suggested by numerous educators, and it was one of the few solutions not already implemented at the center. Educators agreed on the importance of offering pre-service and in-service training for teachers (Abbott-Shim, 1990; Neugebauer, 1991; Whitebook, et al., 1989). Ritchie (1991), stated that training programs motivated and fostered enthusiasm of teaching staff. High quality child care programs offered teacher training programs which emphasized child growth and development (Granger, 1989).

It was expected that this orientation program would motivate newly hired teachers to remain at the center for a longer period of time, would increase the level of commitment from new employees, and would reduce the stress level of newly hired teachers. Becoming familiar with the background of the school, its standards, mission, and visions for the future, would give the staff a deeper understanding of the level of commitment involved in providing this facility. New staff would learn their place of employment is not simply a day care center offering custodial care, but a high quality educational and child care facility. They would be encouraged to become a motivated part of the team, striving to set and maintain high standards for offering quality child care in the community.

It was expected that this orientation and training program would reduce causes of teacher stress. Policies and procedures would be clearly defined, detailed job descriptions would identify staff responsibilities, and stress management would be discussed. Teachers

would no longer feel they were assigned to a classroom and expected to perform, but would first thoroughly understand their responsibilities. As teachers became more familiar with job expectations, job satisfaction and commitment would increase.

Report of Action Taken

Implementation of the practicum orientation and training sessions began with the selection of teachers who would participate. Personnel records identified 11 teachers, who had been hired during the previous six months, to be included in this program. In addition, another teacher in the school expressed an interest in these sessions, and asked to also be included. Therefore, instead of ten teachers (as stated in the expected outcomes), a total of 12 teachers began the orientation sessions. Eleven of the teachers chosen for this practicum implementation were Teacher Assistants. One was in a Head Teacher position. The highest educational level for seven of the participants was a high school education. Two teachers held a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, one held a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, one was a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), and another held a Master of Arts Degree in Music. Their classroom assignments included Infants (6 weeks to l year), Toddlers (1 to 2 years), Two Year Olds, Three Year Olds, Four Year Olds, Jr. Kindergarten, and Sr. Kindergarten. Eleven of these teachers were employed full time at the center, while one worked only part time.

Next, times for the orientation and training sessions were scheduled. It was agreed by the participants, that it was preferable to hold this training during their regularly scheduled work day, rather than in the evenings or on the weekend. In order to do this, participants were willing to attend these sessions during their lunch hour, one day each week. (This coincided with the children's nap time, so additional teachers did not need to be scheduled into their classrooms.) The teacher who worked only part time was willing to report to

work two hours early to participate in the training. Although the training was scheduled during teachers lunch hours, they remained "on the clock" and were paid for the time spent in these sessions.

The first orientation session began with a general overview of the preschool program, and an introduction to the practicum orientation sessions. All twelve participants attended this first, three hour session, which was held in the evening. Teachers rotated into different areas as they were introduced to: (a) the practicum orientation and training outline, (b) computer technology, (c) payroll procedures, (d) staff handbooks, (e) dining room and kitchen procedures, and (f) personnel policies.

During the practicum orientation, each participating teacher was given a loose leaf notebook, listing the topics to be covered in each training session. This style of notebook allowed additional information (handouts) to be added to the notebook as topics were discussed. Also included in the notebook were blank pages, for note taking. Teachers seemed excited about participating in this orientation program, and commented they really felt the information gained would be extremely beneficial. They mentioned they were looking forward to the second training session.

Newly written personnel handbooks were distributed and briefly discussed. A guest speaker taught a basic introduction to using computers in the classroom, and demonstrated how to help children access and use the installed software. (Although classroom computers were already in classrooms, teachers with no prior training in technology, simply had not allowed their classes to use them). Payroll policies and procedures were discussed by the school Accountant. This included computer sign in, state and federal income tax forms, and payroll sheet reviews. The Kitchen Manager discussed dining room procedures for both children and staff. The Personnel Director

identified requirements for employment (e.g., annual Mantoux Tuberculin testing, physical examinations, criminal history checks, first aid, universal precautions, CPR certification). This writer distributed and discussed the new Staff Handbooks. Teachers were reminded about care of personal belongings, staff dress code, reporting of absences, personal telephone calls, performance reviews, smoking, gossip, and professional development.

The next session (as well as the remaining ten sessions) were held during teacher's lunch hours. This session was led by this writer, but the entire Administrative Staff was present. During this session, the importance of an Orientation/Training program was again emphasized by this writer. Teachers freely admitted they had felt *overwhelmed* when they first entered their classrooms, because they had no formal orientation or training. They reiterated how beneficial they felt these classes would be. During this session, the Administrative staff (Executive Director, Assistant Director, Administrative Assistant, and Personnel Director) introduced themselves and described their duties. They discussed both their personal and professional backgrounds, which included their relationship with the preschool. (Before working at the preschool, their children had attended the program. At that time they had been asked to join the teaching staff at the preschool, and had later been promoted into administrative positions.)

This writer then asked the participants what information they would like to gain from these sessions. A list of questions was generated, and recorded on large chart paper. They identified many topics which included: playground rules, classroom procedures (e.g., rotation schedule, attendance, pupil-teacher ratios, children's dismissal, classroom resources, curriculum), career ladder, and special concerns (e.g., biting, aggressive behavior). They especially wanted to learn more about child growth and development, and developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom. They also expressed a desire to be

formally introduced to new staff (as they are hired), and felt there were teachers working at the center they did not know.

This session ended with a formal tour of the facility, and an introduction of the teachers working in each classroom. This writer noticed that although the participants repeatedly expressed a need and interest in this orientation, many yawns were observed, and there seemed to be a relatively low level of interest and enthusiasm.

The third orientation session was conducted by this writer, the Assistant Director, and Personnel Director. A slide show presentation, prepared by the Assistant Director, provided a visual history of the preschool. The original facility, the classrooms, the administrative office, and the playground, were shown. Anecdotes were shared throughout the presentation and teachers laughed when they learned the first administrative office was a coat closet. The contrast between the original facility and the present facility was dramatic, and teachers seemed genuinely surprised at the school's early beginnings. Throughout this presentation, the goals and the vision of the preschool were constantly emphasized. This writer shared reasons the school was originally established, and described the process of realizing a dream come true, when the new center opened. New visions were shared, and teachers were once again reminded of the high standard of quality expected at the school.

The session continued with a discussion of special events (e.g., staff meetings, parent functions, musical programs). Classroom rotation schedules were then distributed to each teacher, and activities for each classroom were discussed. Classroom setup was also discussed, and equipment (e.g., furnishings and materials) was described in detail..

During the fourth session, state licensing regulations were shared with the participants. The Personnel Director began this session with an overview of the session, and then

distributed copies of state licensing requirements. Teachers were asked to place these regulations in their orientation notebook for future reference. Most of the teachers had never seen these regulations, and were pleased to obtain this copy. The requirements of staff (e.g., minimum age to work in preschool and Infant and Toddler classrooms, educational requirements), pupil-teacher ratios, maximum class sizes, and safety regulations were discussed. Health and safety concerns were also stressed during this session, and a video demonstrating Universal Precautions was shown. Teachers were reminded of handwashing procedures and their importance was emphasized (for both themselves and the children), A handout was distributed identifying these procedures. Nutritional requirements for children and food handling by staff, was also stressed at this session. Teachers were also given a handout identifying the State Board of Health requirements, indicating specific food serving requirements for milk, fruit juices, meat and protein, fruits and vegetables, Vitamin A, and bread and cereal.

Since staff First Aid Certification is a requirement for licensing, and these teachers had already received certification, this topic was simply reviewed. Handouts were distributed with First Aid directives, which included information on the wearing of gloves by staff, and procedures for handling children's choking, poisoning, hemorrhaging, seizures, and artificial respiration.

The next weekly session (fifth) was a review of topics presented during the first three sessions, and led by the Personnel Director. A written questionnaire was given to each participant (Appendix B). This questionnaire asked teachers to identify goals and objectives for the center and for themselves (professional objectives). A verbal questionnaire (Appendix D) was also given by the Personnel Director. Staff was asked to identify the center's mission and vision. This seemed to be a frustrating session for most

of the participants. They were unsure of the definition of goals and vision, and found the written questions difficult to understand. The Personnel Director was able to review some of the misunderstood terms, and led the teachers through the procedure by asking questions.

The session presented during the sixth training session was conducted by this writer. It focused on classroom management techniques and procedures. It also included the center's discipline policy for children, and how to handle special concerns (e.g., biting, separation anxiety, special needs children, difficult, and aggressive children). Extensive handouts were given to the teachers addressing these problems and included writings on: (a) characteristics of a successful preschool teacher, (b) circle (or group) time, (c) biting, (d) children's attention spans, (e) preventing and addressing difficult behavior problems, (e) dependent behaviors, and (f) positive reinforcement. Lesson plan forms were thoroughly discussed, and teachers were given suggestions for adapting these plans to meet the individual needs of the children in their classroom.

The rest of the session was spent identifying developmentally appropriate activities as outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). A video, "Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Children Ages Birth Through FIve Years" (NAEYC) was shown, demonstrating these practices.

Teachers seemed especially interested in the topics presented in this session, and this writer was beginning to see increased interest and enthusiasm from the participants. Although the handouts were quite extensive, one of the teachers later told me she had read every word, and had gained much insight into some problems she had been having concerning classroom management. She made very positive comments regarding this training session, and the dissemination of reading material.

Session 6, led by the Personnel Director, was the first of two sessions regarding school and classroom policies and procedures. Teachers were given a copy of the Parent Handbook, and the Personnel Director explained these school policies. Participants were especially interested to understand the policies regarding children who become ill while at the center, as well as the policy for children returning to the classroom following an illness. Forms were distributed to teachers that are required when children become ill at school. Procedures for giving medication to children was also discussed, as well as temperature taking, and contacting parents of ill children.

This session continued with a demonstration on the correct procedure for filling out center reports. Daily reports (which are completed daily for every child in the school), journal entries (summaries of behavior problems), incident reports (reports of minor instances, e.g., biting, hitting), accident reports (reports of any injury or accident), were explained and teachers questions were addressed. Handouts were also given regarding diapering procedures, dining room procedures, and telephone etiquette. Emergency procedures were thoroughly discussed and teachers were given complete instructions regarding emergencies such as fire, severe weather, or medical emergencies. They were reminded about the panic button located in the front office, which silently sends a message of distress to authorities. Closing this session, an instructional video was shown, demonstrating the operation of the center's telephone system. (There is a telephone in each classroom.)

The next session, Session 7, was led by the Assistant Director and the Personnel Director, and the discussion of school policies and procedures continued. Topics for this session included: (a) dispensing children's medication (all medication is given by the Assistant Director), (b) safety precautions for children (e.g., field trips, large muscle room,

playground, swimming), (c) opening and closing procedures for the classrooms and building, (d) use of resource books, (e) operation of the copying machine, (f) ordering of supplies, (g) nap time procedures, and (h) child abuse reporting (as mandated in the state licensing regulations).

Session 8 was conducted by the Assistant Director. This was another review session, and any questions that remained unanswered or unclear, regarding information presented in the previous training sessions, was discussed at this time. A question arose regarding Criminal History Checks. One teacher wanted to know if checks were periodically made after employment, or only upon hiring. (According to state licensing regulations, only one criminal history check is required. Recently, however, the state no longer requires a Criminal History Check to be made. Instead, each employees criminal record must be cleared through a State Police Report.)

Other questions regarded a clarification of discipline procedures for children. Several of the teachers were having difficulty managing children in their classroom, and wanted to be advised of the procedure for asking children to leave the center. The procedure was discussed, and teachers were referred to their Staff Handbook for future reference. (Children are not asked to leave the center, until all measures have been taken to try to solve the behavior problem. This usually requires parent cooperation, and several parent conferences.)

Time out, as a discipline procedure, was also questioned by the teachers. Although this procedure has been occasionally used in the center, teachers were again asked to refer to their copy of the Staff Handbook for the suggested school discipline policy. It was also explained once again by the Assistant Director.

The ninth and tenth sessions focused on the families of children enrolled in the center,

and was conducted by the Assistant Director. (It is one of the responsibilities of the Assistant Director to welcome new families into the center, and to conduct Intake Interviews.) Teachers participated in a parent inquiry visit, and were given the same information as prospective parents. This included an inquiry card (asking name of family, age of children, how they were referred to the center), school brochure, fee schedule, enrollment application, and child's health form. They were reminded of the open parental visitation policy of the center. How to conduct a parent conference, how to greet parents, parent-teacher professionalism, confidentiality, communication, and babysitting for families enrolled in the center, was then discussed.

The majority of this information was new to the teachers. Several had no idea of the cost to enroll a child at the center, or had any idea of the procedure involved when enrolling a child. Teachers were pleased this information had been included in the orientation sessions.

The tenth session continued focusing on families of children in the center. Copies of the policy agreement (which are discussed at the time of the intake interview) were distributed to the teachers. The Assistant Director then conducted an interview, discussing school policies, and answering questions, as she would with a new family. She then discussed the Developmental History form, which new families are asked to complete. (Classroom teachers of the child being enrolled are now included in this discussion, which gives them much additional insight on the child's developmental history.) This session concluded with another video, "Partnerships With Parents" (NAEYC), regarding parent conferences.

The next session was conducted by this writer, and focused on center accreditation procedure as identified by NAEYC. This writer is also a validator for the accreditation process, and since accreditation is a goal for the center, this information was especially

relevant. This writer discussed in detail each practice to be observed during the validation process. These included observations made of the physical environment, health and safety concerns, how staff interacted with children, food and nutrition, and developmentally appropriate curriculum (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1985). Teachers were surprised at the details included in the guidelines for accreditation, and realized there was much work to be done before their center could begin the process. They did unanimously and enthusiastically agree, however, this was a goal they truly wanted to work toward achieving.

The final session of the orientation was a review of all previous sessions. Teachers had previously been given a copy of the written survey they would be asked to complete during this session (Appendix C). They were encouraged to ask any questions before the final survey was given. After the survey was completed by the teachers, each question was read and discussed. Teachers read the questions orally to the group, indicated their responses, and each scored their own survey.

Before ending this session, teachers were surprised with a slide show presentation. This presentation, pictured each of them working in their individual classrooms. They were excited to see themselves interacting with the children, and complimented the administrators on putting together this presentation. The teachers were then invited out to lunch, as a thank you from this writer, for participating in the training sessions.

In conclusion of the orientation program, participants were asked to write an evaluation of this orientation experience. Prompt responses were received from all of the remaining participants (eight), and comments were extremely positive. All participants felt the sessions were extremely valuable, well organized and highly informative. Most mentioned that they were presented with new facts, many of which they were previously

unaware. One teacher commented that questions were answered that she didn't realize she had. Several mentioned the quality of the presentations, and noted that administrators leading the sessions were always well prepared. Most responded that the question and answer period at the end of each session was very worthwhile and helpful. Several mentioned the format of the sessions. Sessions were not simply lectures, presenting information they were to learn, memorize, and later recall (on surveys). They enjoyed the comfort level of the sessions, which allowed teachers to openly share their concerns and questions with one another and the administrative personnel. On a personal level, most commented they enjoyed the opportunity to get to better know their co-workers, and this writer. Participants recommended that this orientation and training program be offered to the entire staff, and suggested that all newly hired teachers be required to participate in these sessions.

Participants also offered suggestions for future orientation and training sessions. Many asked that more information be presented regarding classroom management, especially regarding the handling the behavior of aggressive children. They also asked for more information on developmental levels of the children in their classrooms, and more suggestions for smoother transition times. This, of course, would include developmentally appropriate activities. One teacher suggested that mini-seminars be offered on a weekly basis, addressing various child care issues. She commented that she felt discussing these issues would encourage everyone to function at their highest level of performance.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The situation that needed improvement in this child care center, was the high rate of teacher turnover, especially for newly hired teachers. Because there was no formal orientation or training program in place at the center, this writer chose to develop and implement this program. Orientation and training sessions were offered on a weekly basis for a period of twelve weeks.

Following implementation of this practicum, the following outcomes were expected:

1. Based on employee records, eight out of 10 newly hired employees will remain at the center for a period of three months or longer.

Participants for this orientation program were selected according to their hire date at the center. Eleven teachers, who had been hired during the previous six month period, were asked to participate in the program. In addition, another teacher in the school learned that an orientation and training program was to be offered, and asked to participate. Therefore, there were 12 instead of 10 newly hired teachers participating in the sessions. The expected outcome should have been stated: Based on employee

records, eight out of 12 newly hired employees will remain at the center for a period of three months or longer.

Twelve teachers began the orientation program and all remained at the center until the sixth training session. At that time, one of the participants left the center for maternity leave. (This teacher has now returned to her classroom, following the birth of her baby.) Resignations were also received from three additional teachers participating in the practicum. Two of the teachers had been employed at the center for a period of only three months, the other teacher had worked at the center for eight months. Employee personnel records support that this expected outcome was met. Nine out of twelve newly hired employees remained at the center for a period of three months or longer.

2. Eight out of 10 newly hired employees will receive a minimum score of 90% on a classroom observation check list, evaluating performance as outlined in their job descriptions.

Again, since 12 teachers participated in the orientation sessions, the expected outcome should have read: Eight out of 12 newly hired employees will receive a minimum score of 90% on a classroom observation check list, evaluating performance as outlined in their job descriptions.

This classroom observation (See Appendix A), was made following the implementation of the 12 weeks of orientation and training. At the time these observations were made, eight of the participants were still working at the center. (One of the teachers had not yet returned from maternity leave.) Classroom observations were made by the Personnel Director, and checklists were then scored according to a percentage of items observed. Scores ranged from 72 % to 100%. Two teachers scored 100% on this checklist, indicating all items had been observed. One teacher scored 93% on this observation, two

received 92%. Additional scores were 85%, 82%, and 72%. Therefore, this expected outcome was not met, as only five out of eight newly hired employees received a minimum score of 90% on a classroom observation check list, evaluating performances as outlined in their job descriptions.

3. Eight out of 10 newly hired teachers will be able to identify at least five goals and objectives for their jobs, as measured by a written questionnaire.

This expected outcome should have been stated: Eight out of 12 newly hired teachers will be able to identify at least five goals and objectives for their jobs, as measured by a written questionnaire. At the time this questionnaire was distributed, all 12 teachers were still employed at the center, and participating in the orientation sessions.

This expected outcome was met. Twelve out of 12 newly hired teachers were able to identify at least five goals and objectives for their jobs, as measured by a written questionnaire (See Appendix B).

4. Eight out of 10 newly hired teachers will receive a minimum score of 90% on a written measurement regarding school and classroom policies and procedures.

Again, there were 12 teachers participating in this orientation. The expected outcome should have been stated: Eight out of 12 newly hired teachers will receive a minimum score of 90% on a written measurement regarding school and classroom policies and procedures (See Appendix C). At the time of administering this measurement, one teacher was on maternity leave, and three teachers had resigned. Therefore, only eight teachers completed this measurement. Scores ranged from 86% to 100%. Two teachers scored 100%, one scored 98%, there was one score each of 96% and 94%, two teachers scored 92%, and one teacher's score was 86%. This expected outcome was considered to be met, since seven out of eight teachers received a minimum score of 90% on this

measurement.

5. Eight out of 10 newly hired teachers will score 100% on a verbal questionnaire, identifying the center's mission and future visions.

This expected outcome should have been stated: Eight out of 12 newly hired teachers will score 100% on a verbal questionnaire, identifying the center's mission and future visions (See Appendix D). At the time this questionnaire was given, all 12 teachers were still employed at the center. This outcome was achieved, as 10 out of 12 newly hired teachers identified the center's mission and future visions.

Discussion

Shirah, Hewitt, and McNair (1993) state that one of the four major causes for staff turnover may be "a lack of training in critical safety job skill competencies and knowledge in child development" (p. 27). This absence of training can increase teachers stress levels and may also affect their job performance (Shirah, Hewitt, & McNair).

This writer agrees, as following the practicum implementation, participants indicated a greater understanding of their job responsibilities and felt an increased comfort level in their teaching positions. They identified information on child growth and development as an additional training need.

When using the Classroom Observation Checklist (see Appendix A), all teachers were punctual in reporting for work, observed the center dress code, were helpful in preparing and implementing classroom activities, and promptly responded to directions given by the head teacher. They were able to perform routine tasks, and accurately completed daily report forms. They frequently addressed children by name, in a friendly, pleasant manner. When addressing individual children they did not shout across the room, but moved toward each child to give direction. Only one teacher did not bend to address children at

eye level. Teachers followed designated discipline procedures when necessary, and showed understanding and concern for individual children.

Several of the procedures identified on this checklist were not observed. Some teachers did not follow the recommended procedure for greeting children and parents into their classroom, did not smile, and were not enthusiastic. Others failed to display a nurturing attitude toward the children, and only occasionally praised children.

When responding to the questionnaire identifying center goals and objectives (see Appendix B), teacher responses varied widely. Most correctly identified the importance of the children's safety as the most important consideration (goal) of the center. They were able to discuss the high standards of the school, and emphasized the importance of providing a secure, nurturing, homelike environment for young children. They also stressed the educational aspects of the school, and recognized the importance of providing for the children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.

When identifying policies and procedures (see Appendix C), teachers were able to identify operating policies as stated in the parent handbook, the personnel handbook, and the state regulations. Although teachers identified safety as the school's first consideration, the questions relating to safety was an area most teachers responded to incorrectly. Several were confused as to when accident or incident reports were to be completed, and when parents should be contacted if an injury occurs to their child.

The verbal questionnaire asking for the mission and vision of the school to be identified (see Appendix D), was confusing to the teachers. It was necessary to again explain the difference between the terms mission and vision. Following a brief explanation, teachers were able to correctly respond, to each of these questions. They stated the desire to provide a high quality preschool education for the children of working parents, as the

mission of the school. Also included in their definition was the importance of providing a secure, safe, homelike environment for the children. The vision of the school included the growth of the center, and planning to expanded into other areas of the city.

This writer believes the orientation and training program implemented for this practicum was extremely beneficial for both the center and the participants. Not only were four out of five of the expected outcomes met, but teachers had the rare opportunity to interact with their colleagues, learn together and share mutual problems and concerns. In addition, throughout the practicum implementation, teachers had the opportunity to witness this writer's strong personal commitment to high quality child care. They were able to more clearly understand why the preschool was originally founded, and why it is critical to maintain the highest possible standards. Most importantly, they learned the mission of the center, its goals, and its dreams for the future.

The entire staff of the school was affected by the implementation of this practicum, as following each session, participating teachers informally shared their newly acquired knowledge with their head teachers and other teaching staff. Many teachers asked that these sessions be repeated so they could also have the opportunity to participate in this program.

Although staff turnover was reduced as a result of this practicum, it is interesting to understand why three of the participating teachers resigned from their positions. Since one teacher left the center following her work shift and never returned, exit interviews were held with only two of the teachers. One, was a part time student in a local university, who had decided to continue her education on a full time basis. The other teacher was a single mother who was licensed in practical nursing. Because she was experiencing financial difficulties, it was critical that she find a higher paying position,

which she was able to do in the field of nursing. This teacher had been employed at the center for only three months, and was working in the Infant room, an area where consistency of staff is vitally important (Whitebook & Granger, 1989; Galinsky, 1989). Although administrators felt it was important that she continue in her classroom, it was impossible to offer her a competitive salary.

There is little doubt that low pay scales and lack of benefits are other causes of teacher turnover (Shirah, Hewitt, & McNair, 1993; Bloom, 1993; Webb & Lowther, 1990; Daniel, 1990; Stremmel, 1991; Modigliani, 1986; Stroeber, et al., 1989; Perreault, 1990; Granger, 1989; Ritchie, 1991; Galinsky, 1989; Pettygrove, et al., 1984). It is not surprising that after completing four years of college, graduates in the field of education are not satisfied with wages only slightly above minimum wage. Studies confirm that teachers are extremely discontented with the pay scale and benefits offered in the child care profession (Bloom, 1993). At this writer's center, those holding degrees in education frequently remain at the center for only a short period of time. It often appears that child care centers are a "holding area" for teachers, until they are able to secure a more lucrative position in the public school systems.

One teacher at the center holds a degree in Early Childhood Education, and has been unable to find a teaching position in the public school system. Therefore, she has remained at the center for almost two years. It is no secret, however, that she has continually pursued a higher paying position in her field. Recently, a part time teaching position in the public school system became available, which she accepted. She was also able to continue working at the writer's center on a part time basis. Now, she has been offered a full time position in the public school, and has tendered her resignation at the center. There is little recourse for the center, as there is no monetary motivation for her to remain in a lower

paying position.

Another teacher, a recent graduate holding a degree in Early Childhood Education, was hired at the center. She was applying for a Head Teacher position in one of the Toddler classrooms and during her interview, teacher turnover was discussed. Because this class had recently had experienced turnover of staff, she was told of the importance of hiring someone who would remain in this classroom, at least for the school year. She was convincing, when she agreed to make that commitment, and emphatically stated her desire to work in a child care center rather than a public school system. She was hired for the position, and four weeks later submitted her resignation. It seems a relative was able to "pull strings" and locate a teaching position for her in the public school system. Her commitment to the toddlers in her classroom, their parents, and this writer's center, lasted only long enough to find a higher paying position.

It is somewhat encouraging to note that during the past six months staff turnover has decreased within the center. Perhaps one reason for this decreased turnover rate, is the fewer number of teachers with degrees in education, that are presently employed in the center. It is disturbing to think that child care centers are unable to attract and retain qualified teachers to work in this profession (Whitebook & Granger, 1989). Classrooms must be adequately staffed, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to hire qualified workers (Shirah, Hewitt, & McNair, 1993). According to Shirah, Hewitt, and McNair, many owners of child care centers are finding it necessary to hire untrained staff, because they have no alternative. If the industry is forced to address the problem of turnover by hiring untrained, entry level employees, then offering an extensive orientation and training program becomes even more critical.

In summary, teacher turnover in child care centers is a problem that continues to

escalate. If centers are unable to hire and retain qualified teachers, orientation and training programs are critical to providing high quality child care. This writer is unable to increase salaries to be competitive with public school systems or most other professions. But it is possible to solve one of the suggested causes of turnover, by offering in-depth, continuing teacher orientation and training programs.

Recommendations

1. The orientation and training sessions as implemented in this practicum should be offered for a longer period of time. If sessions were lengthened, or offered on a continuous basis, topics could be covered more in depth, and additional subjects (e.g., child growth and development, safety skills), could be covered more extensively.

2. These orientation and training sessions should be offered to the entire child care staff. Staff attendance should be required, documented and recorded in personnel files.

Dissemination

Since turnover is a critical concern for most all child care owners and operators, this writer plans to share this practicum with other area child care directors. Several directors have already expressed a need for offering orientation and on-going training sessions at their centers, and after realizing this writer was implementing such a program, have already asked for the results to be shared. Area directors meet monthly to discuss common problems and concerns, and staff turnover is one of the most frequently discussed subjects. This practicum and its results could be shared during this time. If high quality childcare is going to be provided for our nation's children, it is critical that others also address this crucial problem.

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APPENDIX A

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECK LIST

Classroom Observation Checklist

	Observed	Not Observed
1. Teacher is punctual in reporting for work.		
2. Observes center dress code (e.g., appropriate dress, aprons).		
3. Displays a pleasant disposition--smiles!		
4. Warmly greets parents and children, addressing children first.		
5. Has "fun" and is energetic when interacting with children.		
6. Assists Head Teacher in classroom activity preparations.		
7. Assists in implementing activities.		
8. Responds quickly to directions given by Head Teacher.		
9. Performs routine tasks, without direction.		
10. Accurately completes Incident, Accident, and Daily Reports.		
11. Displays nurturing attitude toward children (hugs, pats, etc.).		
12. Encourage children to properly handle and care for materials.		
13. Encourages children to participate in activities.		
14. Addresses children by name.		
15. Bends to eye level, when addressing children.		
16. Quickly attends a child in distress.		
17. Moves around the classroom (or playground) interacting with children.		
18. Personal conversation with coworker is minimal.		
19. Helps distribute snack and encourages children to eat		
20. Helps distribute snack or materials.		

21. Speaks to children in a friendly, pleasant manner.
22. Does not shout across the room when addressing children.
23. Encourages children to make choices.
24. Uses designated discipline procedures, when necessary.
25. Shows understanding and concern for children.
26. Redirects children toward activities, when necessary.
27. Redirects children in a positive manner.
28. When necessary, reminds children of safety rules.
29. Reminds children to wash hands after toileting.
30. Frequently praises children.

APPENDIX B

CENTER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Center Goals and Objectives

1. You have been selected as a staff member to help fulfill the goals and objectives of this preschool/child care center. What is the first and most important consideration (goal) of this school?

2. List several other goals and objectives for your position (and this center).

3. Briefly describe the standards of the school and identify how you can help achieve these standards.

4. List at least five goals and objectives for your position at this school.

APPENDIX C

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SURVEY

Policies and Procedures

School Operating Policies and Parent Handbook

1. The operating hours of the center are from _____to_____.

2. The school is owned by_____.

3. Who may pick up a child in your class?_____

4. What is the school policy regarding parental classroom visitation?_____

_____

5. If a you suspect a child in your class has been abused, what must you do?

_____

6. Give the pupil-teacher ratios for the following age groups:

Infants_____Toddlers_____Two Year Olds_____Three Year Olds_____

Four Year Olds_____ Five Year Olds_____ Six through 12 Year Olds____

7. To care for infants and toddlers, teachers are required to have

_____

8. In case of a fire alarm, children should be taken out of the building through the front door. T F

9. If a child is slightly hurt, it is not necessary to notify parents. T F

10. To care for infants and toddlers, teachers must be _____years of age.

Personnel Policies

11. Teachers should park their vehicles in the school parking lot. T F

12. Teachers may bring their own food and drinks into the classroom, and eat in front of the children. T F

13. Teachers may make or receive personal telephone calls from telephones located in the classroom. T F

14. Physically or mentally abusing a child or group of children results in immediate job termination. T F

15. It is permissible to smoke in the parking lot of the school T F

16. Not reporting for work for scheduled time will result in immediate job termination. T F

17. If a teacher violates dress code, he/she will be sent home to change clothes. T F

18. Teachers may discuss their personal problems with parents of children. T F

19. The first concern for every teacher and for the school, is the _____of the children.

20. Teachers are identified by wearing _____and_____.

Classroom Management

21. List, in order, the steps for disciplining a child.

22. What is the longest time a child should remain in a "time out" chair, if he/she is four years old?_____

23. Children who are hard to manage, will be asked to leave the center. T F

24. A child should be harshly reprimanded if he/she bites or hits another child or adult. T F

25. Incident Reports inform a parent of:

26. Accident Reports inform a parent of:

27. Journal entries should be made when:

28. Parent conferences are held _____times per year.

29. List 4 ways the school promotes parent communications:

30. If parents are having personal problems (e.g., separation, divorce) the teacher should take sides. T F

31. All children must take naps. T F

32. If children do not sleep during nap time, they must remain on their cots. T F

33. Shades are closed and all lights are turned off during nap time. T F

34. Radio music can be played during nap T F

35. Following nap time, cots must be sprayed with a solution of soap and water. T F

35. Teachers may take a child's temperature, if he/she feels warm. T F

36. It is the duty of the teacher to diagnose a child's illness or disease. T F

37. If a child is in danger of hurting him/herself or others, the teacher should loudly shout the child's name. T F

38. Although daily lesson plans are provided for teachers, it is not necessary to introduce all of the activities. T F

39. During children's nap time, teachers may read novels, write personal letters, or do class homework. T F

40. When parents and children enter or leave the classroom, it is not necessary to acknowledge them. T F

41. The smoothest way to handle transition times is to:

42. Teachers should frequently say "Stop that!", or "Don't do that". T F

43. If equipment is broken, a note should be placed in _____mailbox.

44. When talking to children teachers should:

45. Teachers should notify _____if they are having concerns or problems in their classroom.

46. Tables and cots are cleaned with a _____solution.

47. Teachers should sit down often and watch children play. T F

48. When observing children on the playground, teachers may stand together and talk, as long as they are discussing school related topics. T F

49. During class lunch time, teachers should:

50. In the large muscle room teachers should:

APPENDIX D

CENTER'S MISSION AND VISION

Centers Mission and Vision

1. The school was originally established in what year?

2. The mission of the school at that time was:

3. The new preschool/child care center opened in (Month/Year):

4. Briefly state the mission of the school.

5. Briefly state the vision of the school.